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THE SIXTIES



FOURTEEN POETS OF FRANCE

Why did I write The Poem Turned To Mist? Because at the close of his voyage toward the home province, after the darkness before birth, and the hardness on earth, the limits of the poem are light, a contribution of the creature to life.

—René Char

My sisters, this is the holy water which drives always more directly to the core of summer.

—René Char

How often we think we have nothing to say when a poem is waiting in us, behind a thin curtain of mist, and it is enough to silence the noise around us for that poem to be unveiled.

—Supervielle

It is not only in dreams, or in that mild delirium which precedes sleep, but it is even awakened that I hear music — that perception of an analogy and an intimate connection between colours, sounds, and perfumes. It seems to me that all these things were created by one and the same ray of light, and that their combination must result in a wonderful concert of harmony. The smell of red and gold marigolds above all produces a magical effect on my being. It makes me fall into a deep reverie, in which I seem to hear the solemn, deep tones of the oboe in the distance.

—Hoffmann

THE SIXTIES

Editors: William Duffy, Robert Bly

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Gérard De Nerval

LE REVEIL EN VOITURE

Voici ce que je vis: —Les arbres sur ma route
Fuyaient mêlés, ainsi qu'une armée en déroute;
Et sous moi, comme ému par les vents soulevés,
Le sol roulait des flots de glèbe et de pavés.

Des clochers conduisaient parmi les plaines vertes
Leurs hameaux aux maisons de plâtre, recouvertes
En tuiles, qui trottaient ainsi quedes troupeaux
De moutons blancs, marqués en rouge sur le dos.

Et les monts enivrés chancelaient: la rivière
Comme un serpent boa, sur la vallée entière .
Étendu, s'élançait pour les entortiller . . .
—Jétais en poste, moi, venant de m'éveiller !

COMING AWAKE ON A BUS

Here is what I saw: the trees in my way
Running in confusion, a beaten army:
And below me, rippled by the high winds,
The soil rolled out long waves of clods and cement.

Steeples in green places herded the small towns,
These plaster houses with red tile roofs
Ran plodding along behind like flocks of white sheep
With red splashes of dye on their backs.

And the drunk hills were staggering: the river,
Like a boa unfolded out over
The whole valley, threw itself forward to gather
them in . . .
— I was sitting in a bus, just coming awake!

From Oeuvres, *Bibliothèque de la Pleiade,* 1952.
Translated by James Wright.

GÉRARD DE NERVAL

VERS DORÉS

Eh quoi ! tout est sensible !
—Pythagore

Homme, libre penseur ! te crois-tu seul pensant
Dans ce monde où la vie éclate en toute chose ?
Des forces que tu tiens ta liberté dispose,
Mais de tous tes conseils l'univers est absent.

Respect dans la bête un esprit agissant :
Chaque fleur est une âme à la Nature éclose;
Un mystère d'amour dans le métal repose;
" Tout est sensible ! " Et tout sur ton être est puissant.

Crains, dans le mur aveugle, un regard qui t'épie :
À la matière même un verbe est attaché . . .
Ne la fais pas servir à quelque usage impie !

Souvent dans l'être obscur habite un Dieu caché;
Et comme un oeil naissant couvert par ses paupières,
Un pur esprit s'accroît sous l'écorce des pierres !

GOLDEN LINES

"Astonishing! Everything is intelligent!"
—Pythagoras

Man of unlimited thought! — Do you think you have the only thought
On this earth in which life blazes inside all things?
Your liberty does what it wishes with the powers it controls,
But when you gather to plan, the universe is absent.

Look carefully in an animal at a spirit alive;
Every flower is a soul opening out into nature;
A mystery touching love is asleep inside metal;
"Everything is intelligent!" And everything moves you.

In that blind wall, look out for the eyes that pierce you;
The substance of creation can not be separated from a word . . .
Do not force it to labor in some low phrase!

Often a Holy Thing is residing hidden in a dark creature;
And like an eye which is born covered by its lids,
A pure spirit is growing strong under the bark of stones!

From Oeuvres.
Translated by Robert Bly

THEOPHILE GAUTIER

LES COLOMBES

Sur le coteau, là-bas où sont les tombes,
Un beau palmier, comme un panache vert
Dresse sa tête, où le soir les colombes
Viennent nicher et se mettre à couvert.

Mais le matin elles quittent les branches :
Comme un collier qui s'égrène, on les voit
S'éparpiller dans l'air bleu, toutes blanches,
Et se poser plus loin sur quelque toit.

Mon âme est l'arbre où tous les soirs, comme elles,
De blancs essaims de folles visions
Tombent des cieux, en palpitant des ailes,
Pour s'envoler dès les premiers rayons.

THE DOVES

Down there among the gravestones on the hill
A fine palm tree resembling a green feather
Lifts its head where the doves at evening
Come to nestle and put themselves to bed.

But in the morning they fly off the branches :
Like an unstrung necklace they are seen
Scattering whitely in the blue air,
To land upon some roof farther away.

My soul is a tree, where like them, every night
Wild swarms of white visionary things
Fall out of the skies, beating their wings
And fly away at the first ray of light.

From Poésies Complètes, *Charpentier,* 1855.
Translated by Charles Guenther.

CHINOISERIE

Ce n'est pas vous, non, madame, que j'aime,
Ni vous non plus, Juliette, ni vous,
Ophélia, ni Béatrix, ni même
Laure la blonde, avec ses grands yeux doux.

Celle que j'aime, à présent, est en Chine;
Elle demeure avec ses vieux parents,
Dans une tour de porcelaine fine,
Au fleuve Jaune, où sont les cormorans.

Elle a des yeux retroussés vers les tempes,
Un pied petit à tenir dans la main,
Le teint plus clair que le cuivre des lampes,
Les ongles longs et rougis de carmin.

Par son treillis elle passe sa tête,
Que l'hirondelle, en volant, vient toucher;
Et, chaque soir, aussi bien qu'un poète,
Chante le saule et la fleur du pêcher.

CHINOISERIE

It is not you, no, Madame, that I love,
Nor yet you, Juliette, nor you,
Ophelia, nor Beatrice, nor even
Laura the blonde, with her large soft eyes.

The one whom I love, at present, is in China;
She lives with her aged parents,
In a fine porcelain tower,
By a yellow river, where cormorants are.

She has eyes turned up at the corner,
A foot small enough to hold in one's hand,
A color clearer than lamp-copper,
Long nails reddened with carmine;

By her lattice she dips her head,
Which the swallow, flying, comes to touch,
And each night, as well as any poet
Sings of the willow and the flower of the peach.

From Poésies Complètes.
Translated by Michael Benedikt

LE CRÉPUSCULE DU MATIN

La diane chantait dans les cours des casernes,

Et le vent du matin soufflait sur les lanternes.

C'était l'heure où l'essaim des rêves malfaisants
Tord sur leurs oreillers les bruns adolescents;
Où, comme un oeil sanglant qui palpite et qui bouge,
La lampe sur le jour fait une tache rouge;
Où l'âme, sous le poids du corps revêche et lourd,
Imite les combats de la lampe et du jour.
Comme un visage en pleurs que les brises essuient,
L'air est plein du frisson des choses qui s'enfuient,
Et l'homme est las d'écrire et la femme d'aimer.

Les maisons ça et la commençaient à fumer.
Les femmes de plaisir, la paupière livide,
Bouche ouverte, dormaient de leur sommeil stupide;
Les pauvresses, traînant leurs seins maigres et froids,
Soufflaient sur leurs tisons et soufflaient sur leurs
doigts.

DUSK BEFORE DAWN

Reveille sounded in the courtyard of military barracks,
And the morning wind ruffled its breath through lamps.

It is the time of night when hordes of insane fancies
Torture on their beds the sun-burned adolescents;
When like a bleeding eye which throbs and rolls
The lamp makes only a red bruise against the daylight,
And the soul, borne down under the gross and sodden body,
Repeats the struggle of power of the lamp and the daylight.
Like a face in tears which the gusts try to dry
The air is full of the whispering sounds of things that at last escape,
And man is sick of writing, and woman of making love.

Houses, here and there, begin to give off smoke.
Women of joy, with eyelids the color of ashes,
And mouth fallen open, sleep the sleep of beasts.
The women who are poor, dragging their thin and cold breasts,
Blow on their chunks of coal, and blow on their hands.

C'était l'heure où parmi le froid et la lésine
S'aggravent les douleurs des femmes en gésine;
Comme un sanglot coupé par un sang écumeux
Le chant du coq au loin déchirait l'air brumeux;
Une mer de brouillards baignait les édifices,
Et les agonisants dans le fond des hospices
Poussaient leur dernier râle en hoquets inégaux.
Les débauchés rentraient, brisés par leurs travaux.

L'aurore grelottante en robe rose et verte
S'avançait lentement sur le Seine déserte,
Et le sombre Paris, en se frottant les yeux,
Empoignait ses outils, vieillard laborieux.

It was the time of night when among cold and
pinching of pennies
The pains of the women in labor increase;
Like a sob that is cut by a jet of blood
The cry of a cock far off slashed the smoky air;
A sea of fog bathed the monumental buildings;
And those who were dying in the bottoms of hospitals
Pushed out their last breath in irregular hiccoughs.
The whore mongers return, broken by the labors.

The dawn, shivering with cold in her dress of red
and green,
Wandered slowly along the abandoned Seine,
And Paris, rubbing his eyes, and profoundly gray,
Reached for his tools, like an old man who is still
working.

From Les Fleurs Du Mal,
Editions De Cluny, 1941.
Translated by Robert Bly

RECUEILLEMENT

Sois sage, ô ma Douleur, et tiens-toi plus tranquille.
Tu réclamais le Soir; il descend; le voici :
Une atmosphère obscure enveloppe la ville,
Aux uns portant la paix, aux autres le souci.

Pendant que des mortels la multitude vile,
Sous le fouet du Plaisir, ce bourreau sans merci,
Va cueillir des remords dans la fête servile,
Ma Douleur, donne-moi la main; veins par ici,

Loin d'eux. Vois se pencher les défuntes Années,

Sur les balcons du ciel, en robes surannées;

Surgir du fond des eaux le Regret souriant;

Le Soleil moribond s'endormir sous une arche;
Et, comme un long linceul traînant à l'Orient,
Entends, ma chère, entends la douce Nuit qui marche.

INWARD CONVERSATION

Be reasonable, my pain, and think with more detachment.
You asked to see the night; it descends; it is here;
A sheath of dark light robes the city,
To some bringing peace, to some the end of peace.

Now, in the hour when the rotten herds of mankind,
Flogged by pleasure, that lyncher without touch,
On the streets pick remorse in their rotten holidays,
Let us join hands, my pain; come this way,

Far from them. See the long-dead years leaning over
The balconies of heaven, in their out-of-fashion clothes;
Loss rise from the ocean floor with jeers;

The decrepit sun drop asleep beside the piles;
And like a long shroud being drawn from the East,
Listen, love — hear the tender night that is coming toward us.

Translated by Robert Bly.

CORRESPONDANCES

La nature est un temple où de vivants piliers
Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles;
L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles
Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers.

Comme de longs echos qui de loin se confondent
Dans une ténébreuses et profonde unité,
Vaste comme la nuit et comme la clarté,
Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répondent.

Il est des parfumes frais comme des chairs d'enfants,
Doux comme les hautbois, verts comme les prairies,
Et d'autres, corrompus, riches et triomphants,

Ayant l'expansion des choses infinies,
Comme l'ambre, le musc, le benjoin et l'encens,
Qui chantent les transports de l'esprit et des sens.

INTIMATE ASSOCIATIONS

The natural world is a spiritual house, where the
    pillars, which are alive,
Let slip at times some strangely garbled words;
Man walks there through forests of physical things
    that are also spiritual things,
Which watch him with affectionate looks.

As the echoes of great bells coming from a long
    way off
Become entangled in a deep and profound
    association,
A merging as huge as night, or as huge as clear light,
Odors and colors and sounds all mean — each other.

Perfumes exist that are as fresh as the bodies of
    infants,
Fragile as oboes, green like open fields,
And others exist also, corrupt, dense, and triumphant,

Having the suggestions of infinite things,
Such as musk and amber, myrrh and incense,
Which describe the voyages of the body and soul.

Translated by Robert Bly

PARFUM EXOTIQUE

Quand, les deux yeux fermés, en un soi chaud
d'automne,
Je respire l'odeur de ton sein chaleureux,
Je vois se dérouler des rivages heureux
Qu'éblouissent les feux d'un soleil monotone;

Une île paresseuse où la nature donne
Des arbres singuliers et des fruits savoureux;
Des hommes dont le corps est mince et vigoureux,
Et des femmes dont l'oeil par sa franchise étonne.

Guidé par ton odeur vers de charmants climats,
Je vois un port rempli de voiles et de mâts
Encore tout fatigués par la vague marine,

Pendant que le parfum des verts tamariniers,
Qui circule dans l'air et m'enfle la narine,
Se mêle dans mon âme au chant des mariniers.

THE RARE PERFUME

When, with both eyes closed, on a warm night in
September,
I breathe in the odor of your breasts that give off
warmth,
I see joyous shores slowly unrolling before me,
Shores that lie blazing in the fires of a never clouded
sun;

An island given over to laziness on which nature has
placed
Trees never seen before and delicious fruits;
Men who have bodies that are agile and strong,
And women whose eyes astonish by their frankness.

Conducted by your odor to these charming places,
I see a harbor all full of sails and masts
Still absolutely exhausted by the heaving sea,

While the perfume coming from the green tamarinds
Moves slowly in the air, and loads my nostrils,
And mingles in my soul with the songs of the men
of the sea.

Translated by Robert Bly.

ÉVENTAILS

XVI

À Mme. Ponsot

Aile, mieux que sa main, abrite
Du soleil ou du hâle amer
Le visage de Marguerite
Ponsot, qui regarde la mer.

Juillet 93

FANS

XVI

To Mme. Ponsot

Fan, rather than her hand, shelter
From the sun or the sultry air
The face of Marguerite
Ponsot, who watches the sea.

From Vers de Circonstance, Oeuvres Complètes,
Bibliothèque de la Pleiade, 1945.
Translated by Charles Guenther

Stéphane Mallarmé

SONNET

(Pour votre chère morte, son ami.)
2 *novembre* 1877

— Sur les bois oubliés quand passe l'hiver sombre
Tu te plains, ô captif solitaire du seuil,
Que ce sepulcre à deux qui fera notre orgueil
Hélas ! du manque seul des lourds bouquets
s'encombre.

Sans écouter Minuit qui jeta son vain nombre,
Une veille t'exalte à ne pas fermer l'oeil
Avant que dans les bras de l'ancien fauteuil
Le suprême tison n'ait éclairé mon Ombre.

Qui veut souvent avoir la Visite ne doit
Par trop de fleurs charger la pierre que mon doigt
Soulève avec l'ennui d'une force défunte.

Âme au si clair foyer tremblante de m'asseoir,
Pour revivre il suffit qu'à tes lèvres j'emprunte
Le souffle de mon nom murmuré tout un soir.

SONNET

(For your dear wife now dead, from her friend)
2 November 1877

— " While the dark winter is passing over the woods now forgotten,
Lonesome man imprisoned by the sill, you are complaining
That the mausoleum for two which will be our pride
Is unfortunately burdened down with the absence of masses of flowers.

Without hearing 12 o'clock throw down his senseless number,
A wakefulness gives you strength not to close your eyes
Until in the arms of that wing chair we had so long
The last breath of flame lights up my Ghost.

Whoever wishes to receive the Visit often should not
Weight down the gravestone with too many flowers, that stone which my finger
Raises, with the habit of a strength now absent.

As a soul trembling to take my place before the bright fire,
In order to live again it is necessary only to borrow from your lips
The breathing of my name whispered softly an entire evening."

From Oeuvres Complètes.
Translated by Robert Bly.

CHANSON D'AUTOMNE

Les sanglots longs
    Des violons
    De l'automne
Blessent mon coeur
    D'une langueur
    Monotone.

Tout suffoquant
Et blême, quand
    Sonne l'heure,
Je me souviens
Des jours anciens
    Et je pleure.

Et je m'en vais
Au vent mauvais
    Qui m'emporte,
De çà, de là,
Pareil à la
    Feuille morte.

AUTUMN SONG

The long wails
Of the autumnal
Violins
Wound my heart
With a tuneless
Numbness.

Choked
And pale, when
The hour bell rings,
I remember
The old days
And am moved to tears.

And I give in
To the evil wind
Which carries me
Now here, now there,
As it does
A dead leaf.

From Poèmes Saturniens,
Oeuvres Complètes, *Bibliothèque de la Pleiade,* 1949.
Translated by Charles Reynolds

MARINE

Les chars d'argent et de cuivre —
Les proues d'acier et d'argent —
Battent l'écume, —
Soulèvent les souches des ronces.
Les courants de la lande,
Et les ornières immenses du reflux,
Filent circulairement vers l'est,
Vers les piliers de la forêt, —
Vers les fûts de la jetée,
Dont l'angle est heurté par des tourbillons de lumière.

MARINE

The chariots of silver and copper —
The prows of steel and silver —
Beat the foam —
Tear at the roots of brambles.
The offshore currents,
And the huge paths of the ebbing tide,
Circle toward the east,
Toward the pillars of the forest,
Toward the timbers of the pier,
Where it is bending wounded with whirlpools of light.

From Colored Pictures;
Oeuvres de Arthur Rimbaud;
Mercure de France, 1952.
Translated by Louis Simpson.

COMÉDIE DE LA SOIF

1

LES PARENTS

Nous sommes tes Grands-Parents,
Les Grands!
Couverts des froides sueurs
De la lune et des verdures.
Nos vins secs avaient du coeur!
Au soleil sans imposture
Que faut-il à l'homme? boire.

MOI—Mourir aux fleuves barbares.

Nous sommes tes Grands-Parents
Des champs.
L'eau est au fond des osiers:
Vois le courant du fossé
Autour du chateau mouillé.
Descendons en nos celliers;
Après, le cidre et le lait.

MOI—Aller où boivent les vaches.

Nous sommes tes Grands-Parents;
Tiens, prends
Les liqueurs dans nos armoires;
Le Thé, le Café, si rares,
Frémissent dans les bouilloires.
—Vois les images, les fleurs.
Nous rentrons du cimetière.

MOI—Ah! tarir toutes les urnes!

A COMEDY OF THIRST

1

HIS PARENTS

We are your Grandparents,
Your Great-grandparents!
Covered with the cold sweats
Of the moon and the grass.
Our dry wines are strong!
Without pretension in the sun
What should man do? — Drink.

I.—To die in savage rivers.

We are your Grandparents,
From the fields.
The water lies beneath the willows:
See the moat waters wash around
The crumbling castle.
Go down to our cellars;
Afterwards, cider and milk.

I.—To go where the cows are drinking.

We are your Grandparents;
Come near, take
The liqueurs from our cabinets;
The tea, the coffee, rare,
Hissing in our urns.
— Look at the statues, and the flowers.
We come back from the cemetery.

I.—Yes! To drink down all the urns!

2

L'ESPRIT

Éternelles Ondines,
  Divisez l'eau fine.
Vénus, soeur de l'azur,
  Emeus le flot pur.

Juifs errants de Norwège,
  Dites-moi la neige.
Anciens exiles chers,
  Dites-moi le mer.

MOI—Non, plus ces boissons pures,
  Ces fleurs d'eau pour verres;
Légendes ni figures
  Ne me désaltèrent;

Chansonnier, ta filleule
  C'est ma soif si folle
Hydre intime sans gueules
  Qui mine et désole.

3

LES AMIS

Viens, les Vins vont aux plages,
Et les flots par millions!
Vois le Bitter sauvage
Rouler du haut des monts!

2

HIS SPIRIT

Eternal women of the waves,
    Part the delicate waters;
Venus, sister of the blue sky,
    Wake the pure waves.

Jews wandering from Norway,
    Tell me about the snow;
Dear old exiles,
    Tell me about the sea.

I.—No, no more of these pure drinks,
    These flowers made of water in the goblets;
No old legends and no images
    Can end my thirst;

Spirit, you who sing, my insane thirst
    Is your god-child,
It is a many headed spring without snouts
    Who undermines and makes sad.

3

HIS FRIENDS

Look, the wines are crashing on the shores,
A hundred thousand long waves!
The savage river of Bitters
Is falling from high in the mountains!

Gagnons, pèlerins sages,
L'Absinthe aux verts piliers . . .

MOI—Plus ces paysages.
Qu'est l'ivresse, Amis?

J'aime autant, mieux, même,
Pourrir dans l'étang,
Sous l'affreuse crème,
Près des bois flottants.

4

LE PAUVRE SONGE

Peut-être un Soir m'attend
Où je boirai tranquille
En quelque vieille Ville,
Et mourrai plus content:
Puisque je suis patient!

Si mon mal se résigne,
Si j'ai jamais quelque or,
Choisirai-je le Nord
Ou le Pays des Vignes? . . . .
—Ah! songer est indigne

Puisque c'est pure perte!
Et si je redeviens
Le voyageur ancien,
Jamais l'auberge verte
Ne peut bien m'être ouverte.

Wise pilgrims, come, let us win
Absinthe with her green pillars . . . .

I.—No more landscapes.
My friends, what is drunkenness?

I love just as much, more, myself,
To rot in a pond
Under the ghastly scum
Not far from the floating logs.

4

THE SAD DREAMER

Perhaps the night shall come
When I will drink quietly
In some old-fashioned town,
And die then with more ease:
Because I am at peace!

If my horrible luck should leave,
Or if I became rich,
Should I choose the North
Or the Nations of the Wine?
— Such daydreams are beneath me

Because they are pure waste!
And if I turned once more
Into the old wanderer,
I would never find
The green inn open for me.

5

CONCLUSION

Les pigeons qui tremblent dans la prairie
Le gibier, qui court et qui voit la nuit,
Les bêtes des eaux, la bête asservie,
Les derniers papillons! . . . ont soif aussi.

Mais fondre où fond ce nuage sans guide,
—Oh! favorisé de ce qui est frais!
Expirer en ces violettes humides
Dont les aurores chargent ces forêts?

5

CONCLUSION

The pigeons which tremble in the green plains,
The rabbit, which runs, and which sees the night,
The water-beasts, the beasts that are enslaved,
The final butterflies! . . . are also in thirst.

But to melt away where that drifting cloud is melting,
— Oh, in the graces of all those things that are cool;
To find death among these damp violets
With which the dawn is loading down the forest?

From Oeuvres.
Translated by Robert Bly

LE CRAPAUD

Un chant dans une nuit sans air . . .
—La lune plaque en métal clair
Les découpures du vert sombre.

Un chant; comme un echo, tout vif
Enterré, là, sous le massif . . .
—Ca se tait: Viens, c'est là, dans l'ombre . . .

—Un crapaud! —Pourquoi cette peur,
Près de moi, ton soldat fidèle?
Vois-le, poète tondu, sans aile,
Rossignol de la boue . . . —Horreur!—

—Il chante. —Horreur!! —Horreur pourquoi?
Vois-tu pas son oeil de lumière . . .
Non: il s'en va, froid, sous sa pierre.

. . . .

Bonsoir—ce crapaud-là, c'est moi.

THE TOAD

A song in the windless night . . .
The moon plates in clear metals
Cut-outs of dark green.

A song; like an echo, buried
Alive, there, under the thick clump . . .
— It stops: Come here, look, in the shadow . . .

— A toad ! — Why this trembling
Next to me, your protector ?
Look at him, the wingless hairless poet,
The nightingale of mud . . . — Ugh !

— He is singing. — Ugh ! ! — Why **ugh** ?
Don't you see that luminous eye . . .
No : he goes off, cold, under his stone.

. . . .

Goodnight. That toad was me.

From Les Amours Jaunes, *Gallimard,* 1953.
Translated by Donald Hall

DIMANCHES

Hamlet: Have you a daughter?
Polonius: I have, my lord.
Hamlet: Let her not walk in the sun; conception is a blessing; but not as your daughter may conceive.

Le ciel pleut sans but, sans que rien l'émeuve,
Il pleut, il pleut, bergère! sur le fleuve . . .

Le fleuve a son repos dominical;
Pas un chaland, en amont, en aval.

Les Vêpres carillonnent sur la ville.
Les berges sont désertes, sans idylles.

Passe un pensionnat (ô pauvres chairs!)
Plusiers ont déjà leurs manchons d'hiver.

Une qui n'a manchon, ni fourrures
Fait, tout en gris, une pauvre figure.

Et la voilà qui s'échappe des rangs,
Et court? ô mon Dieu, qu'es-ce qu'il lui prend?

Et elle va se jeter dans le fleuve.
Pas un batelier, pas un chien Terr'-Neuve.

Le crépuscule vient; le petit port
Allume ses feux. (Ah! connu, l'décor!)

Le pluie continue à mouiller le fleuve,
Le ciel pleut sans but, sans que rien l'émeuve.

SUNDAYS

Hamlet: Have you a daughter?
Polonius: I have, my lord.
Hamlet: Let her not walk in the sun; conception is a blessing; but not as your daughter may conceive.

The sky rains aimlessly, without being urged,
It rains and rains, O farmgirl, in the river . . .

The river has the repose of a bishop;
No hay barges, above the bridge or below.

The evening church-bells are ringing over the town.
The beaches are abandoned, without romances.

A boarding school goes by (O pitiful bodies!)
Some already have their winter muffs.

One who has neither muff nor furs
Makes a sad little figure, dressed completely in gray.

And there — she breaks out of the line,
And runs? My God, what is happening to her?

And she is throwing herself into the river.
No barge men, no Newfoundland dogs.

The nightfall arrives. This small harbor town
Lights its fires. (O Lord, I know these furnishings!)

The rain continues to dampen the river,
The sky rains aimlessly, without being urged.

From Oeuvres Complètes,
Mercure de France, 1951.
Translated by Charles Reynolds

COMPLAINTE

DE L'OUBLI DES MORTS

Mesdames et Messieurs,
Vous dont la mère est morte.
C'est le bon fossoyeux
Qui gratte à votre porte.

Les morts
C'est sous terre;
Ca n'en sort
Guère.

Vous fumez dans vos bocks,
Vous soldez quelque idylle,
Là-bas chante le coq,
Pauvres morts hors des villes!

Grand-papa se penchait,
Là, le doigt sur la tempe,
Soeur faisait du crochet,
Mère montait la lampe.

Les morts
C'est discret,
Ca dort
Trop au frais.

Vous avez bien diné,
Comment va cette affaire?
Ah! les petits mort-nés
Ne se dorlotent guère !

PROTEST

ABOUT HOW PEOPLE FORGET THE DEAD

Ladies and gentlemen,
You who have a dead mother,
It is the good bone-turner
Who's scratching at your door.

The dead
Are underground;
They're not around
Much.

You blow into your glass of beer;
You say that love affair is finished;
Down there a rooster is crowing;
Poor dead, outside the city limits !

Grandpapa used to hunch over,
There, his finger against his head,
Sister would do her crocheting,
Mother would turn the lamp higher.

The dead
Are shy;
They sleep too much
In the chill.

Now you've had an excellent supper,
And how is the business going ?
Ah, the poor things dead at birth
Get hardly any cuddling !

Notez, d'un trait égal,
Au livre de la caisse,
Entre deux frais de bal:
Entretien tombe et messe.

C'est gai,
Cette vie;
Hein, ma mie,
O gué?

Mesdames et Messieurs,
Vous dont la soeur est morte,
Ouvrez au fossoyeux
Qui claque à votre porte;

Si vous n'avez pitié,
Il viendra (sans rancune)
Vous tirer par les pieds,
Une nuit de grand'lune!

Importun
Vent qui rage!
Les défunts?
Ca voyage.

Note, with the same handwriting,
In the book of petty cash
Between two bills for dances:
Grave-care and mass.

It's gay,
This life;
No, my dove,
Eh?

Ladies and gentlemen,
You who have a dead sister,
Open up for the bone-turner
Who's knocking at your door.

And if you have no pity on him,
He'll come (with no hard feelings)
And take you out by the feet
One night of the full moon !

O eager wind
That is raging !
The dead ?
They're on a trip.

From Oeuvres Complètes.
Translated by Charles Reynolds

INTÉRIEUR

Une esclave aux longs yeux chargés de molles chaînes
Change l'eau de mes fleurs, plonge aux glaces prochaines,
Au lit mystérieux prodigue ses doigts purs;
Elle met une femme au milieu de ces murs
Qui, dans ma rêverie errant avec décence,
Passe entre mes regards sans briser leur absence,
Comme passe le verre au travers du soleil,
Et de la raison pure épargne l'appareil.

A ROOM

A slave woman with long eyes, loaded with soft chains,
Refreshes the water of my flowers, vanishes in neighbouring mirrors,
Moves her pure hands to the mysterious bed;
She establishes a woman in the vicinity of these walls
Who wanders through my thinking mood
And passes between my dazed looks without noticing they are not there,
As a pane of glass moves across the path of the sun
And does without the devices of pure logic.

From Poèsies, *Gallimard,* 1950.
Translated by Robert Bly

From ELOGES

18

À présent laissez-moi, je vais seul.
     Je sortirai, car j'ai affaire: un insecte
m'attend pour traiter. Je me fais joie
     du gros oeil à facettes: anguleux, imprévu,
comme le fruit du cyprès.
     Ou bien j'ai une alliance avec les pierres
veinées-bleu: et vous me laissez également,
     assis, dans l'amitié de mes genoux.

From PRAISES

Part 18

But for now, go away, I must be alone.
I shall go outdoors, for I have an appointment :
an insect is waiting to speak to me. I get a great joy
from his huge eye with many sides: full of angles,
unsuspected, like the fruit of a cypress tree.
Or on the other hand I have a liaison with those
stones who have blue veins: at any rate you will
leave me here,
sitting down, in the friendly company of my knees.

From Eloges, Bollingen, New York, 1956.
Translated by Robert Bly

WHISPER IN AGONY

Ne vous étonnez pas,
Abaissez les paupières
Jusqu'à ce qu'elles soient
De véritable pierre.

Laissez faire le coeur,
Et même s'il s'arrête
Il bat pour lui tout seul
Sur sa pente secrète.

Les mains s'allongeront
Dans leur barque de glace
Et le front sera nu
Comme une grande place
Vide, entre deux armées.

WHISPER IN AGONY

Do not be astonished,
Let your eyelids fall
Even until they are made
Of real stone.

Let the heart alone,
And even if it stops
It is beating for itself
Alone on its secret hill.

The hands shall open their fingers
In their ship of glass
And the forehead will be empty
Like a large field,
Wide, between two armies.

From Poèmes, *Gallimard, 1946.*
Translated by Charles Reynolds

MAX ERNST

Dans un coin l'inceste agile
Tourne autour de la virginité d'une petite robe
Dans un coin le ciel délivré
Aux épines de l'orage laisse des boules blanches.

Dans un coin plus clair de tous les yeux

On attend des poissons d'angoisse.

Dans un coin la voiture de verdure de l'été

Immobile glorieuse et pour toujours.

À la lueur de la jeunesse
Des lampes allumées très tard
La première montre ses seins que tuent des insectes rouges.

MAX ERNST

In one corner agile incest
Hovers about the virginity of a small frock
In one corner the abandoned sky
Releases white balls to the thorns of thunder.

In one corner that all the eyes have made brighter
They are expecting the fishes of anguish.
In one corner the carriage of the foliage of summer
Immobile, glorious, and forever.

By the light of the youthfulness
Of lamps ignited extremely late
The first to come shows her breasts which the scarlet insects are killing.

From Voir, *Editions des Trois Collines.*
Translated by Robert Bly

PASSER

Le tonnerre s'est caché derrière des mains noires

Le tonnerre s'est pendu à la porte majeure

Le feu des fous n'est plus hanté le feu est misérable

L'orage s'est coulé dans le tombeau des villes

S'est bordé de fumées s'est couronné de cendres

Le vent paralysé écrase les visages

La lumière a gelé les plus belles maisons

La lumière a fendu le bois la mer les pierres
Le linge des amours dorées est en charpie

La pluie a renversé la lumière et les fleurs
Les oiseaux les poissons se mêlent dans la boue

La pluie a parcouru tous les chemins du sang
Effacé le dessin qui menait les vivants.

TO GO BY

Thunder has hidden behind black hands

Thunder has hung itself from the main door
The fire of the madmen is no longer haunted the fire
    is pitiful

The storm has flown into the tombs of the cities
It has bordered itself with smoke it has crowned it-
    self with ashes
The paralyzed wind crushes the faces

The light has frozen the loveliest houses

The light has split the woods, the sea, the rocks
The cloth of golden loves is in rags

The rain has poured out the light and the flowers
The birds the fish mingle in the mud

The rain has run through all the roads of blood
Rubbed off all the blueprints which showed the road
    to the living.

From Chanson Complète, *Gallimard,* 1939.
Translated by Charles Reynolds

SUR LES HAUTEURS

Attends encore qui je vienne
Fendre le froid qui nous retient.

*

Nuage, en ta vie aussi menacée que la mienne.

(Il y avait un précipice dans notre maison.
C'est pourquoi nous sommes partis et nous sommes établis ici.)

ON THE HIGH PLACES

Wait a little until I come
To break the cold which holds us.

*

Cloud, danger in your life, as in mine.

(There was a cliff in our house.
That is why we left and set up our household
here.)

From Fureur et Mystère, *NRF,* 1948.
Translated by Robert Bly

René Char

LASCAUX

Homme-Oiseau Mort Et Bison Mourant

Long corps qui eut l'enthousiasme exigeant,

A présent perpendiculaire à la Brute blessée.

O tué sans entrailles!
Tué par celle qui fut tout et, réconciliée, se meurt;
Lui, danseur d'abîme, esprit, toujours à naître,
Oiseau et fruit pervers des magies cruellement
sauvé.

Les Cerfes Noirs

Les eaux parlaient à l'oreille du ciel.
Cerfs, vous avez franchi l'espace millénaire,
Des ténèbres du roc aux caresses de l'air.

Le chasseur qui vous pousse, le génie qui vous voit,
Que j'aime leur passion, de mon large rivage!
Et si j'avais leurs yeux, dans l'instant où j'espère?

FOUR POEMS ON THE CAVE PAINTINGS AT LASCAUX

Bird Man Dead and Bison Dying

Long body which had the enthusiasm which it is difficult to hold,
At the moment perpendicular to the Beast that's wounded.

Yes, without entrails, and killed!
Killed by the female Beast, who was everything, and who, appeased, now dies;
And the Birdman, dancer over the chasm, spirit, always ready to be born,
Bird and bad fruit of black magic saved through cruelty.

Black Stag

The waters were talking to the ear of heaven.
Stags, you have achieved the crossing of a thousand years of space,
From the darkness of rock to the gentle touch of air.

The hunter who is pushing you, the genius who is watching you,
How I love their passion, from my wide shore!
And what if I had their eyes, in this instant full of hope?

La Bête Innommable

La Bête innommable ferme la marche du gracieux troupeau, comme un cyclope bouffe.
Huit quolibets font sa parure, divisent sa folie.
La Bête rote dévotement dans l'air rustique.
Ses flanc bourrés et tombants sont douloureux, vont se vider de leur grossesse.
De son sabot à ses vaines défenses, elle est enveloppée de fétidité.

Ainsi m'apparaît dans la frise de Lascaux, mère fantastiquement déguisée,
La Sagesse aux yeux pleins de larmes.

Jeune Chavel à la Crinière Vaporeuse

Que tu es beau, printemps, cheval,
Criblant le ciel de ta crinière,
Couvrant d'écume les roseaux!
Tout l'amour tient dans ton poitrail:
De la Dame blanche d'Afrique
À la Madeleine au miroir:
L'idole qui combat, la grâce qui médite.

The Beast It Is Impossible To Name

The Beast it is impossible to name brings up the rear
of the graceful herd, like a buffoonish cyclops.
Eight odd puns are her ornamentation, dividing her
madness into parts.
The Beast belches piously in the agricultural air.
Her sides crammed and hanging are full of pain,
ready to be free of their burden.
From her hoof to her futile weapons, she is wrapped
in a strong odor.

So I saw, in the frieze at Lascaux, our mother, fantastically disguised,
Wisdom, with her eyes full of tears.

Young Horse With Misty Mane

How beautiful you are, spring, horse,
Combing the skies with your mane,
Covering the roses with foam!
Love of all kinds huddles in your great breast:
From the white Lady of Africa
To the Magdalene in the mirror:
The statue that goes to war, the mercy which
meditates.

From La Paroi et la Prairie, *NRF*, 1952.
Translated by Robert Bly

DIVERGENCE

Le cheval à la tête étroite
A condamné son ennemi,
Le poète aux talons oisifs,
A de plus sévères zéphyrs
Que ceux qui courent dans sa voix.
La terre ruinée se reprend
Bien qu'un fer continu la blesse.

Rentrez aux fermes, gens patients;
Sur les amandiers au printemps
Ruissellent vieillesse et jeunesse.
La mort sourit au bord du temps
Qui lui donne quelque noblesse.

C'est sur les hauteurs de l'été
Que le poète se révolte,
Et du brasier de la récolte
Tire sa torche et sa folie.

BRANCHING OFF

The horse with the narrow head
Has damned his enemy to death.
The poet with the lazy heels
Knows more vigorous winds
Than those which flow in his voice.
The earth that is ruined heals
Even though an iron sword continues to wound
it.

Patient people, return to your farms;
Over the almond trees in spring
Old age and youth pour down.
Death smiles from the shore of time
And gives it some dignity.

It is on the arrogant hills of summer
That the poet attacks society,
And from the bonfire of the grain
He pulls his torch and his insanity.

From Fureur et Mystère.
Translated by Robert Bly

LA VERITE VOUS RENDRA LIBRES

Tu es lampe, tu es nuit;
Cette lucarne est pour ton regard,
Cette planche pour ta fatigue,
Ce peu d'eau pour ta soif,
Les murs entiers sont à celui que ta clarté met au monde,
O détenue, ô Mariée !

TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE

The lantern is you, and the light is you;
This dormer window is for you to look from,
This plank is for your exhaustion,
This bit of water for your thirst,
All these walls belong to the being whom your pure
  light brought into the world.
O prisoner, O bride!

From Fureur et Mystère.
Translated by Robert Bly

LIEU DE LA SALAMANDRE

La salamandre surprise s'immobilise
Et feint la mort.
Tel est le premier pas de la conscience dans les pierres,
Le mythe le plus pur,
Un grand feu traversé, qui est esprit.

La salamandre était à mi-hauteur
Du mur, dans la clarté de nos fenêtres.
Son regard n'était qu'une pierre,
Mais je voyais son coeur battre éternel.

O ma complice et ma pensée, allégorie
De tout ce qui est pur,
Que j'aime qui resserre ainsi dans son silence
La seule force de joie.

Que j'aime qui s'accorde aux astres par l'inerte
Masse de tout son corps,
Que j'aime qui attend l'heure de sa victoire,
Et qui retient son souffle et tient au sol.

PLACE OF THE SALAMANDER

The startled salamander freezes
And feigns death.
This is the first step consciousness takes inside stone,
The purest myth,
A great fire passed through, which is spirit.

The salamander was halfway up
The wall, in the light coming from our windows,
Its gaze was only a stone,
But I saw its heart beating eternal.

O my accomplice and my thought, allegory
Of all that is pure,
How I love that which holds in its silence, thus,
The single force of joy.

How I love that which gives itself to the stars by the
inert
Mass of its whole body,
How I love that which awaits the hour of its victory
And holds its breath and holds to the ground.

From Du Mouvement et de L'immobilité de Douve,
Mercure de France, 1954.
Translated by Galway Kinnell

SOME NOTES ON FRENCH POETRY

An anthology of French poetry could be put together called *The French Voyage into the Imagination.* When Mallarmé says, "The body is sad, unfortunately, and I have read the books," he means that he is about to start on a great voyage. The French poets in the early nineteenth century start off on a voyage into the sea of imagination. It is this voyage Mallarmé speaks of when he says:

> But hear, my soul, the songs of those who
> sail the sea.

And Baudelaire says:

> The perfume from the green tamarind trees
> Circles in the air, and loads my nostrils,
> And mingles in my soul with the songs of the
> men of the sea.

It is this sea voyage which sets off French poetry so drastically from English poetry. The great body of modern poetry in English is like a trip on land. On land, one is surrounded on all sides by land. But entering the sea the back is turned to the land, and the face to something else.

One must also say that because of this voyage French poetry has exactly what American poetry of the last thirty years has *not*: a true interest in the life below the "world." Rimbaud is not admirable because he took dope, as the Beats believe, nor because he shouted *Merde!* during contemporary poetry readings, though that was admirable also — but because he grasped the deep interior life flowing beneath the reason.

If our poetry is like a trip on land it also, to follow the image, tends to be dry, and to follow the main roads. We have no poems like Nerval's "Golden Lines" or Baudelaire's "Intimate Associations."

The reason is simple: the older American and English poets have not been interested in the sea, nor in the unconscious, in the animal world, nor in the kindness and gentleness that often mark those who embark on such a voyage.

It is interesting to compare French poetry to recent American poetry — to, for instance, the poetry of Eliot, Pound, etc. The problem is not, as Mr. Shapiro says, that Eliot is "classical," but that his poetry lacks kindness and gentleness. The same is true of Pound. The same is true of the prose of Henry Miller. When we realize this, we see that Mr. Shapiro's categories are irrelevant. Pound, Eliot, and Miller all have a hardness, a desire to be *tough,* a dislike of the lower classes, of Americans, of animals, of sexual life. In an earlier issue of *The Sixties* we mentioned that the modern movement in poetry which has brought a truly new poetry to many countries came to the United States chiefly through Eliot and Pound. We said that the one thing they removed from it as it passed through their hands was the unconscious.

The new statement — that what is missing in their work, with respect to French poetry, is kindness and gentleness — would seem to be a different point. The two ideas are closely related, however. Both Eliot and Pound believe and have said, as Anthony Hecht expressed very well in his recent review in the *Hudson Review* (Spring, 1960), that only ugly and horrible things come out of the unconscious. Mr. Hecht is criticising a book of recent German poetry:

> The fantastic and hideous images from the unconscious certainty have their place in poetry, and they are no doubt universally available. The dear old gentleman who faithfully brings crumbs to the pigeons in winter may have

> nightmares as foul as the next man, and Bosch knew very well how monstrous and vivid these presences might be to a saint in the desert. They are demons, our secret evil longings, and they are very real. But these images exist outside of time, eternally, everywhere, and in their submerged and terrible domain we are pretty much alike. It is history that makes us, or lets us be, what we are uniquely, and gives to our lives their singular stamps and profiles.

Mr. Hecht notes clearly that our duty as civilized men is to cling to the reason, and avoid the unconscious. This attitude has been stated many times by Eliot, as, for instance, in *After Strange Gods*. It is present in a subterranean way in Pound's work, as for instance in his anti-Semitism. This attitude is nothing more nor less than a fear of the unconscious.

It is this fear which Eliot and Pound have communicated to the younger American poets who have come after them. This fear is precisely what the French poets do not have.

Such a fear maintains that the only things we can expect from the unconscious are ugly and horrible things, images, and emotions. (This is why Eliot says, " Institutions are necessary.") Since the unconscious intimately touches all instinctive life, this doctrine suggests also that the world of animals is basically evil. How far this is from the " Golden Lines " of Nerval! In fact, the ideas could not be more opposed.

The belief in the treachery of instinctive life and of the world of animals is the instigation of the unkindness which characterizes the work of Eliot and Pound. Because of this habit of mind, their poems and criticisms in my opinion give a false impression of the essential nature of French poetry. Baudelaire and Rimbaud are very different from Eliot's and

Pound's descriptions of them — even La Forgue is different. Most persons take their view of La Forgue principally from Eliot — with notions of futility, cosmic irony, self-depreciation, alienation, and so on. La Forgue's poems and Eliot's differ in that La Forgue's work has great love, love of women and of nature, and also great gusto in his view of his own nature, his own intelligence, his own manliness. This joyfulness, kindness, and humaneness is visible even in the poems translated here. It is not essentially different in nature from the mood of trust in the animal world that moves through Nerval's poem "Golden Lines" or Baudelaire's poem "Intimate Associations."

The "mysterious" poets — Nerval, Baudelaire, Rimbaud, and Mallarmé — form a continual flow through the entire nineteenth century, moving on the life that flows beneath the historical world. Corbière is not a part of this to any degree, and it is Corbière's work that Eliot's and Pound's work most resembles. His hatreds and self-mockeries are genuinely meant, and his self-depreciation is not playful, just as Eliot's and Pound's hatred of themselves and others is seriously meant.

The fear of the unconscious which is present in Eliot and Pound and in the entire *neo-classical* school is the precise opposite of the trust and kindness which gave life to the avant-garde of French poetry. This fear of the unconscious, an old Puritan emotion, entered American poetry once more with Eliot and Pound, and seemed strengthened in 1914, since it was seemingly supported by avant-garde European literature. The fear has multiplied in American poets after Eliot and Pound. Hart Crane would have none of it, and his translation of La Forgue, for example, shows the true sweetness of La Forgue. Fear of the unconscious however, enters

strongly into poets such as Tate or Winters in the 'twenties, and is communicated by such men as Tate to younger poets such as Robert Lowell. Karl Shapiro adopted this fear of the animal world, writing poems praising Buicks, and his recent attempt to put up Ginsberg as an antidote to Eliot seems to me completely mistaken — for Ginsberg's work has the same fear of the unconscious and the same unkindness. Ginsberg's attacks on himself and attempts to degrade himself are no more valuable than his attacks on "Mammon." It is the same Eliot or Pound self-depreciation. Even though Eliot and Pound hate the Jews and Ginsberg hates the squares, it doesn't make any difference : it is all the same thing. *Time* magazine eggs on Ginsberg to hate the squares even more.

One reason we learn almost nothing about French poetry in college is that trust of the animal world, of instinctive life, of the unconscious, is almost utterly foreign to universities. It is also foreign to the sterile world of the *Evergreen Review*, our supposed *avant-garde.*

The French voyage into the imagination, based on a trust of the unconscious, is one that has hardly been begun by poets writing in the English language. One reason is that American poets do not live enough in solitude. Yet the life of voyage is not impossible in the English language. The poems of John Haines, Richard LaFuze, Louis Hammer, and E. D. Blodgett in this issue, three of whom have never been published before, show suggestions of the same kind of life. Older American poets also — Whitman, Hart Crane, Theodore Roethke — have contributed to the little genuine poetry we have.

—Robert Bly

ON SOLITUDE

'THE SERIOUSNESS of art moves those whose attention and disposition are inward. Even the creative artist realizes very well that of all his works, the one which reflects and reveals him best has been done in solitude. All genesis preserves a little shadow and mystery. It is in solitude that the artist feels himself alive with energy, in secret depth where nothing from the daily world disturbs or obliges him to disguise himself. It is there that he feels and discovers himself; he sees, finds, desires, loves and becomes naturally saturated in the primary sources of instinct. It is there, more than anywhere else, that he is given the power to raise and illumine with his mind the subjects which he opens and reveals. . . . .'

Odilon Redon, quoted in
Museum of Modern Art Bulletin,
Winter, 1952.

AT HSI CHIEN

I love to gaze alone at the dark grasses growing
beside the river,
When the orioles are calling in the thick woods.
The spring tides come swiftly down swollen by the
rains,
By the deserted ferry the boat swings to and fro.

Wei Ying-Wu, in
Poems of the T'ang Dynasty,
translated by Soame Jenyns,
John Murray, London, 1952.

IF THE OWL CALLS AGAIN

at dusk
from the island in the river
and it's not too cold,

I'll wait for the moon
to rise,
then take wing and glide
to meet him.

We will not speak,
but hooded against the frost
soar above
the alder flats, searching
with tawny eyes.

And then we'll sit
in the shadowy spruce and
pick the bones
of careless mice

while the long moon drifts
toward Asia
and the river mutters
in its icy bed.

And when morning climbs
the limbs
we'll part without a sound,

fulfilled, floating
homeward as
the cold world awakens.

E. D. Blodgett

FRAGMENT FROM A MOLE'S HISTORY

The mole shakes his head
and tests the edge of the world.

but listen,
there are packs of waves pass northern coasts
that shelter anthems of dead,
mute as arabian fountains.

the mole trembles by the side of the world.

it's only angels move,
spilling the western edge of things
over hills and trees
into anarchy of song.

this leaves the mole alone,
next to a loud flowering of tombs.

Richard LaFuze

RETURN TO FLIGHT

Out of stillness
Comes the pure sound
Of new joy
Stroking my throat strings;
Birds —
I understand you
Birds —
I fly in
Thick silence.

POEM ON FORGETTING THE BODY

Riding on the inner side of the blackbird's
Wings, I feel the long
Warm flight to the sea;
Dark black in the trees at night.
Along the railroad tracks
In men's minds wild roses grow.
Lingering as ripe black olives
I go down the stairs of the little leaves,
To the floating continent
Where men forget their bodies
Searching for the tiny
Grain of sand behind their eyes.

EXPANSION IS THE SECRET OF LIFE

We were, having just risen,
In the great migration of morning;
Shifting whitecaps exploded at sea;
Near the loosening head of the gull
Was the strangeness of air.
Beachcombers' eyes
Gazed at the curve of the gull.
Elements grew suddenly in stature;
We watched elephants rise from the earth
And walk far out into sea;
We all rejoiced with the earth
That was happy building large beasts.

THE WORK OF JOHN LOGAN

THE first thing that strikes the reader about John Logan is that he is a very strange man. Reading in his poems, one often stumbles on something totally unexpected: one finds a long poem on the old mechanist, La Mettrie; in the middle of a poem on Diogenes, De Rougemont turns up. His poem on the English Romantic poets describes mainly Shelley's brain cooking on the Italian pyre, and certain leeches over Byron's eye. References to his family are equally odd. We gather from the poems that Logan's mother died while the poet was still very young. There is a poem on the mother which suggests that the orphaned poet thought for many years in his early childhood that his mother was a red Irish dog. Metaphors are very strange when examined: he compares his long, ragged poems to children's sparklers; Heine's father to a tree of frost. He likes the widest poles of thought: before a poem, Logan quotes both these ideas: " The tongue fits to the teeth and the palate by Number, pouring forth letters and words " (St. Augustine); and " Years ago I came to the conclusion that poetry too is nothing but an oral outlet." (A. A. Brill, M.D.). This strangeness is interesting, but it is present in any good poetry. Our purpose here will be to try to describe what the poetry has to say.

What is it that sets John Logan apart from his contemporaries, such as W. S. Merwin, or Ginsberg, or Robert Creeley? Well, people say, you see, he is a Catholic and he writes about Saint Catherine and things like that. What is it, then, that sets him apart from other Catholic poets such as John Fandel, Ned

O'Gorman, or Thomas Merton? I would say this: Logan has a sense of grandeur. It is not the grandeur of God either; he has a sense of the greatness inside certain human beings.

I will set down here a few of his ideas, so far as I understand them from the poems. This greatness first of all takes the form of energy. The energy comes from within and results in honesty and a dislike of hokum. As Logan says of Rimbaud while a child:

> He travelled alone in his room
> Lying on a canvas piece
> Of sail harsh to skin . . .
>
> . . . he carved the table's
> Edge in the shape of a spinet:
> But couldn't stand the braid and
> Fat of the township band.

This energy comes from sources inaccessible to the man who possesses or surrounds the energy. He expresses this in the epigraph to the Rimbaud poem: "So much the worse for the wood that finds it's a violin." Rimbaud thought he saw this energy in Verlaine:

> He saw in Verlaine a child
> Of Sun—burnt by the ancient
> Memory, moved on the ancient
> Sunwarmed flank: struck
> As the great brass bells
> At the breasts of the cattle of the sun:
> Pierced or wheeled by the sun—
> Keen tips of the ancient horns.
> But Verlaine, stuck by an ordinary
> Arrow, moved with the faith
> Of his fathers and made a minor sound . . .

Of Rimbaud it was true: he did possess the energy.

Some are moved as the gray
Eyed Io by the god
From home and call: are hurried
To the drowsy lengths of the reed . . .
Some have the face of a god,
Some have the tooth of a swan, or the
    laughable
Lust-sad eye of the calf.

The suggestion that such a man as Rimbaud has in him a god, a swan, or a calf is evidently one of the things he means by calling the poem "The *Lives* of The Poet." Logan believes this intense kind of man to be moved by several energies, several persons inside him:

The weight
Of the gold about his waist
Shall make him sick.

He understands Rimbaud to be great because he is the possessor of the energy even against his will.

Let us look at these ideas as they are reflected in the second long poem in *Ghosts of the Heart*, the poem on Heine. The first stanza is a rich tissue of contradictions.

Heine's mother was a monster
Who had him trained
In business, war and law;
In the first she failed the best:
At work in his uncle's office
He turned a book of Ovid's
Into Yiddish. . . .

These human contradictions in terms, such as the fourth line: "In the first she failed the best", evoke the fantastic confusion in human actions and feelings partially caused, according to Logan, by the multiplicity of beings inside everyone.

This abundant confusion inside Heine, a confusion also of wife and mother, is expressed again when Logan tells of Heine's leaving his wife at home in Paris, while he went into exile:

> He left his mother I mean
> His other at home
> With her nervous bird and her
> Shrieking tantrums—or else
> He left the bird with the wife,
> Et cetera . . .

Because of the existence of these many inward beings, the identity of men keeps shifting.

> . . . . he wrote her a letter a
> Day like a scolding parent
> Afraid she'd become a Paris
> Whore as he hoped she would
> (And as he was) . . .

In the Heine poem, the indecision between mother and wife, so often present in the immature man, occurs on an heroic plane:

> He called his mother a dear old
> "Pussy cat";
> His wife was a "wild cat"; . . . .

He himself is both son and father:

As soon as he left himself
To the needs of a wife
He was shook to find in the face
In the mirror the eyes of his father
When his face had started to fade: . . . .

In Heine, the great energy within often takes the opposite forms of Jew and Christian, or of son and husband. Heine was temporarily a Christian and temporarily, also, a husband. Logan makes it clear that Heine ultimately chooses to become the Jew and to become the son, rejecting the other two ("He never became the husband."). The implied suggestion that to be a Jew is like being an eternal son, and to be a Christian is like being an eternal husband, is very interesting, and leads us toward new strange thoughts.

At any rate, as Heine grows older, he sinks back toward being a son:

He began to be blind, and gave in
To a kind of paralysis that made him
Lift the lid of his eye
By hand to see his wife.

To me, to be able to evoke the detail of Heine's having to lift his own eyelid to see his wife, and to let that stand as an image of the profound mysteries of a man sinking back to sonhood, is brilliant. In lines likes this, Logan writes not so much with images as with *details*—yet those details take on some power far beyond their own, and seem to glow.

At other times, he uses images. An image, as I understand it, brings together different thoughts by inexplicable means. Logan writes of Heine's descent to sonhood:

At the end, cones of opium,
Burned on his spine, helped him
To dream of a younger father
Doing his hair in a snow of powder.

In the next stanza Heine's father becomes a tremendous white tree:

He tried to kiss his father's
Hand but his pink

Finger was stiff as sticks
And suddenly all of him shifts—
A glorious tree of frost!
Unburdened of the sullied flesh.

His death is described in this way:

His soft old flesh slipped
Inside its great
Trunk with a sound he held
Too long inside his skull.

That image is extremely intricate and bold, at the same time. Just as the snow of powder gradually changed to the frosted tree, so the image of the tree trunk, slightly shifted, is still kept, and some silent and terrifying sound is evoked from it, the image suggesting also for the last time the tremendous energies inside Heine.

Another poem in which Logan explains these ideas is the poem on St. Catherine. He suggests here that Catherine achieved her greatness also out of the energies of many persons inside her. He evokes this profusion of persons by comparing her to Joan of Arc, Christ, and Rimbaud. We remember that Logan quoted before his book Melville's sentence: "I am a frigate full of a thousand souls." In the poem on St.

Catherine Logan suggests that some of the persons inside her were men. He suggests that part of the explanation of her power is hidden in the detail from her legend that "she is buried on old Moses' mountain."

> I want to know in what way it is true
> That she is buried on old Moses' mountain,
> Her slender relics and the laws of women
> Mingling with the relics and the laws of men.

Logan's first book was called *Cycle for Mother Cabrini,* and was published in 1955 by Grove Press (it is now out of print). In it there is a narrative poem called "A Short Life of the Hermit." Here the Christian mystic is discussed. The poem describes a typical Egyptian anchorite of the first centuries after Christ: "He sprung of highborn parents", but did not take to school. "In fact / Consistently despised / Your ancient learning." "He lacked a business sense." Logan writes already here with sarcasm, very different from the irony of the followers of Donne.

> At first he saved a bit
> To meet a maiden sister's
> Need for funds, until
> Impatient at a Sunday text
> He took the sister to the nuns.

At last the anchorite learns the "narrow wisdom of the bee", and after some temptations locks himself in a tomb. He stays there for twenty years, meeting many devils, who, as he later describes them, "hiss and prance," but, if not looked at, "seem to fall / Into a melancholy fit / Like an angry child." By his bare style Logan suggests this life of almost incredible nervous tension.

Once he made a basket
Out of stems of reed
And felt a gentle tugging
In his hand; and met
A giant with the withered
Face of birds and long
And whitened arms of men,
Which at the secret name snapped
Into sticks of reed.

Those who go into the desert, of course, do not help society; their gifts are not what the world wants or would like to have.

This is the problem of an anchorite, and one reason there are so few of them today. Society today wants everyone to take part in the outer world, to pay taxes, and give it support. Most people act responsibly. John Logan, for example, supports his wife and nine children with a regular teaching job and occasional extra jobs. He certainly gives society back as much as it gives him. It is interesting, then, that instead of defending his domestic position, as most poets do, he spends his energy understanding the opposite position—that of the anchorite! And he understands it better than any other American poet. The refusal to give anything to society is an old act which Logan accepts with some amiability. He sums up the quality of the anchorite at the close of the poem in a single line:

He died
Old and left the skin of a goat.

I have tried to indicate that Mr. Logan has a content. Content is something that can be denied or agreed with. Logan's content obviously grows from his own thought and it is expressed with economy.

The second power I want to touch on in Logan is a certain lucidity, a certain clarity of eyesight. In his poem on La Mettrie in his first book, the poet says he cannot agree with the mechanist:

For once there was
A blurred and giddy light
In my enormous eyes.

Poets of the last twenty years have had the bad habit of attempting to prove in poem after poem that they are exactly like everyone else. Experiences they have had that differ from ordinary experiences are ignored. The most admired subject for a poem is a baseball game. It must be said that Logan does not belong to this group. The emotion in the lines above is rare; it is the kind of memory that Whitman was interested in. Such a memory occurs once more in a poem in *Ghosts of the Heart* called " Picnic ":

It was then some bright thing came in my eyes,
Starting at the back of them and flowing
Suddenly through my head and down my arms . . .

And Ruth played with shells she found in the creek,
As I watched. Her small wrist which was so sweet
To me turned by her breast and the shells dropped
Green, white, blue, easily into her lap,
Passing light through themselves. She gave the pale
Shells to me, and got up and touched her hips
With her light hands, and we walked down slowly
To play the school games with the others.

Logan's poems have a content, then, and the impulse behind them comes from unusual experiences. The poems are not empty " performances," but evidently spring from what might be called an obscure experience of light.

I have tried to discuss the content because that content has never been described in the reviews. Logan's poetry showed a great leap in quality between his first book and his second, but the reviewing history of both was very spotty. Neither book was reviewed by the *Partisan Review, Kenyon Review,* or *Hudson Review.* The reviews that did appear attempted to treat the poems as old metaphysical poems. *The Virginia Quarterly,* for example, carried this fantastic review which is so bad that I will quote it in its entirety. When I wrote *The Virginia Quarterly* and asked who had written it, they, in true bureaucratic fashion, refused to say.

> One basic pattern of poetic creation is the translation of object into sense impressions and, from there, into emotional and intellectual associations and overt meanings. The obvious temptation is to stop in the middle way, allowing or hoping that individual images, grouped together, will convey meaning by the sum total of their connotative values. At worst, Mr. Logan follows this temptation too readily. Then the imagery of a poem often seems related only by a vague similarity of emotional quality: the total effect of the poem is dissipated. The poet's admittedly direct borrowings of lines and phrases from other writers reflects this tendency of his to rely on the individual figures of speech as the thematic revelation. At best, Mr. Logan resumes the role of poet as organizing creator and formulates thematic patterns within which his electric figurative language is free to synthesize into the meaningful whole that is the poem. When he accomplishes this, John Logan is among the best of our younger poets.
>
> —*Virginia Quarterly Review,*
> Autumn, 1960.

The faults of Mr. Logan's poetry can actually be described in fairly simple words, and it seems to me it does have some faults. At times the voice is too loud, as if he were shouting over the heads of many people. A certain quietness is usually missing. Also, there is a tendency for the words to be too bare, as if they were sticks, to hit himself or others with. The language of the poems at times does not seem to obey the poet quietly, but rather to be overpowered by him. Force is visible. There is a tendency to use four-letter words, or to be temporarily the tough-guy, which is nothing but an embarrassment at being a poet. Occasionally the poems are cluttered with biblical or classical references, which, like most allusions of this kind, do not increase the sensuousness of the texture, but merely inflate it. Lastly, there is a tendency to see himself more clearly than others. Sometimes he is carried up and along on the winds of his own sins, engrossed by the sound of rushing air.

Over and above these faults, Mr. Logan is a poet of authentic vigor and originality. The originality cuts through the poetic habits of the last ten years. His poetry, for instance, is not decorative. The imagery is not charming nor exciting alone, but serves to express thought. The thought as a whole forms a content, the main drift of which is against the generally accepted ideas, whether ideas of personality, sainthood, love, or poetry. This must be the end of a short tour through the work of John Logan. He is a strange one, the possessor of great energy and power. He continually stands in the water on one foot, like some long-legged heron.

—CRUNK.

BOOKS OF POETRY PUBLISHED IN 1960

THE six most interesting books of 1960, in my opinion, included two first books: *Into The Stone* by James Dickey, Poets of Today VII, Scribners, $3.95, and *What A Kingdom It Was* by Galway Kinnell, Houghton Mifflin, $3.00. Kinnell's poem on Avenue C is impressive. James Dickey has genius which he tries to hide in foliage and verbiage, but it is still there. Gary Snyder published this year *Myths and Texts*, Eighth Street Bookstore and Totem Press together, available from 32 West 8th St., N.Y. at $1.25. The book is peculiar; Snyder's thought is very far from the thought of most other poets. John Logan's *Ghosts of the Heart*, published by the University of Chicago Press at $2.75 is reviewed elsewhere in this issue. Denise Levertov brought out a profoundly sober book called *With Eyes At The Back Of Our Heads*, New Directions, $3.50. The sixth book I would choose is W. S. Merwin's *The Drunk In The Furnace*, Macmillan, $1.25. Both the Pulitzer and the National Book Award should have gone to two of these six poets, in my opinion.

The Lamont Poetry Prize for a first book went to Robert Mezey's *The Lovemaker*, which was junk. The most praised book of the year was Anne Sexton's *To Bedlam And Part Way Back*. The book has interesting writing, though most of it is not poetry, but some form of prose.

The books of Robert Duncan and Richard Eberhart interested me greatly. In both books there are long stretches of rhetoric, which both poets evidently take seriously, interrupted by real poems. Duncan's moose poem, suggesting that the poem should be "all moose", for instance, is a wonderful poem.

Robert Penn Warren brought out another of his

books of false poetry, in which there are all the trappings of poetry: love of folksy people, meters, the "structure of meaning", but no real poetry. Howard Nemerov, Hayden Carruth, John Frederick Nims, and Randall Jarrell also published interesting books.

The worst book of the year was probably Charles Olson's *Maximus Poems*. This is Babbitt in verse, and it is painful to see intelligent men defend it. Donald Hall, Adrienne Rich, and John Hall Wheelock all deserve a kick in the rump for giving the Bollingen Prize to Yvor Winters, particularly since men such as Robinson Jeffers, whose imagination is a thousand times stronger than Winters', still has not received it. Eberhart also deserves it. Considering the whole drift of his work, Winters is not a poet at all, but a policeman. The force of his life has gone into opposing the imagination. A light verse poet, Phyllis McGinley, was given the Pulitzer. All in all, it was a good year for poetry, but a fantastic year for judges.

Stanley Burnshaw published a book that he has worked on for years. Modern poems in several of the European languages are printed in the original faced by a long paraphrase of the poem in English prose by different hands. First rate poets, many of them unknown in the U.S. are chosen, and the book is extremely valuable. It is called *The Poem Itself*, published by Holt, Rinehart, and Winston at $6.50. Knopf published *Six Poets of Modern Greece*, translated by Edmund Keely and Philip Sherrard, at $5.00. Cavafy, Sikelianos, and Odysseus Elytis have fine poems here. Elytis' "The Mad Pomegranate Tree" is a great poem. Gaetano Massa published a selection of the late odes of Neruda, translated by Fernando Alegria. It is called *The Elementary Odes of Pablo Neruda*, and is available from Las Americas, 249 West 13th St., N.Y. 11.

FROM BAUDELAIRE TO SURREALISM

WE WISH TO RECOMMEND A book on French poetry called *From Baudelaire to Surrealism*, by Marcel Raymond, Wittenborn and Schultz, 38 East 57th St., N.Y., 1950, paper $3.75. It is typical of our determined isolationism that this book was not published by any literary press or poetry group. It was actually published by an art publisher in a series of books touching on modern art, edited by Robert Motherwell. The introduction to the American edition, by Harold Rosenberg, is superb. This book is still available and cannot be praised enough. A book of similar quality, Hugo Friedrich's *Die Struktur der Modernen Lyrik* or '*The Structure of the New Poem*', which was published in Germany in 1956, and is now famous all over Europe, still has not been translated and published in this country.

I will quote a few passages from Raymond's *From Baudelaire to Surrealism* to give some idea of the nature of the book. On traditionalist poets:

> The traditionalist poets, with a few exceptions, used images and metaphors which were listed in the civil register of literature, and which the 'educated' reader greeted with the same satisfaction one feels when 'giving a name' to a face. There was next to nothing in their poems that did not benefit from being recognized as an echo of something heard before. They refused to engender creatures without a respectable home or place of origin. (p. 122.)

On neo-classical poets:

> Today it seems established that though integral neo-classicism might serve as a useful platform for dogmatic criticism, it could not by itself bring forth a living literature. Order is valuable only if it is achieved by a victory over rebellious matter, if it marks the end and completion of a slow process of inner maturation. In their weakness, the neo-classicists made the idea of order the very basis of their work, and thus doomed themselves to 'making' poetry without ever having 'lived' it, and to regarding poetic creation as a kind of exercise in higher rhetoric. (p. 104.)

On Baudelaire, Rimbaud and Mallarmé:

> For them the essential was for man to 'cultivate his soul', but this action of the self upon the self necessarily requires freedom from what is called 'culture'. Thus the poem that is 'speech accessible to all the senses', speech 'of the soul to the soul, summing up everything, perfumes, colors, sounds, thought catching thought and tugging at it', will have all the marks of a revelation. (p. 34.)

AWARD

The Order of the Blue Toad is awarded to Robert Penn Warren and Cleanth Brooks for their book, *Understanding Poetry*.

This book was really written by Joe Friday. When discussing poems, if a poet shows any sign of generous feeling or whimsy, the authors say in a flat voice: 'We just want the facts, ma'am'. They want to know the meter, the authorized symbols, and the rhyme scheme. Of course, poets like A. E. Housman are preferred. The fifth edition (in 1958), for example, has eight poems by A. E. Housman, and not a single poem by Whitman. Obviously, if Whitman wrote poetry, it cannot be understood. The book includes, moreover, no French, Spanish, German, or Chinese poems. The book should have been called *Understanding A. E. Housman.*

The authors are very humble. Behind this humility, however, is a steady acceptance of all the fashionable cliches of the time, including the cliche that the most important thing about a poem is its form. Yeats has a courageous and sarcastic poem called 'After Long Silence'. After a prose paraphrase totally misstating the content of the poem, the authors innocently ask why the original poem is more moving than the re-statement. The answer is: '*The meter is largely responsible for the richness and concreteness the poem has*'.

It is sad to think that this absurd book is used in almost every American university. To encourage another man to write a better book, the authors are awarded **The Order of the Blue Toad.** The toad, wearing A. E. Housman's moustache, is painted on a scarlet background. It is turning a meter machine with its left foot, and correcting term papers with its right. Above its head is the motto: *The Ghost of Criticism Past*, and under the toad's feet a banner that reads: VOTE FOR CALVIN COOLIDGE.

CONTRIBUTORS

JOHN HAINES and his wife moved from New York a few years ago and homesteaded a cabin in the wilderness of Alaska. Mr. Haines spends the winter writing poems, as well as making snowshoes and sledges. He has a dog team. His address is Mile 68, Richardson Highway, Fairbanks, Alaska.

RICHARD LAFUZE is from Liberty, Indiana. He attended the law school at the University of Michigan, until he decided to write poetry. He is now living in Indiana.

LOUIS Z. HAMMER is an undergraduate at Yale. This is his first published poem.

JAMES WRIGHT is a sort of Ancient Mariner. He is completing a group of Jorge Guillen translations for the Guillen volume which Norman Thomas di Giovanni is editing.

E. D. BLODGETT, a poet in his twenties, lives in Minneapolis.

MICHAEL BENEDIKT, who translated one of the Gautier poems, works for Horizon Press in New York.

LOUIS SIMPSON, who translated Rimbaud's "Marine," recently translated also *The Breasts of Tiresias*, a play by Appollinaire. It will be published in Saul Galin's new magazine, *Odyssey*.

CHARLES GUENTHER lives in St. Louis. He has translated an enormous amount of poetry from the Romance languages, and recently published a pamphlet of Italian poetry of this century.

CHARLES REYNOLDS' poems have appeared recently in *Poetry*, *Paris Review*, and the *Nation*. He lives in seclusion in the Black Hills of South Dakota.

DONALD HALL, who translated the Corbière poem here, brought out a violent attack on Randall Jarrell's recent book in the Dec. 26, 1960, *New Republic*. It was the only decent criticism of the book that appeared.

GALWAY KINNELL recently returned from a year in Iran. He is publishing soon his translation of *The Movement and Immobility of Douve*, a book of poems by the French poet Yves Bonnefoy.

It seemed to us that mention of the decade in which a poet becomes an adult is more interesting than the usual mention of his birth-date. For example, Gérard de Nerval was thirty years old in 1838; Théophile Gautier in 1841; Charles Baudelaire in 1851; Stéphane Mallarmé in 1872; Paul Verlaine in 1874; Arthur Rimbaud in 1884; Tristan Corbière in 1875; Jules La Forgue in 1890.

Among the twentieth century poets, Paul Valéry was thirty years old in 1901; Jules Supervielle in 1914; St. John Perse in 1917; Paul Eluard in 1925; René Char in 1937, and Yves Bonnefoy in 1953.

IN FUTURE ISSUES . . .

The Sixties # 6 will introduce the powerful Spanish poet, Blas de Otero. There are three large generations of Spanish poets so far : the group of Machado, Jiminez, and Unamuno, who were called " the generation of '98 "; then twenty years later, the group of poets which included Lorca, Alberti, Guillen, Salinas, Altolaguirre, and Alexaindre, who were called " the generation of '25". Many of these men are still alive. The most recent generation is that which grew up after the Spanish Civil War. Their poetry is more *social;* one or two of the poets spent their childhood in a Franco prison. Blas de Otero is usually considered the leader of this generation.

In the same issue we will introduce the young Norwegian poet, Paal Brekke, who has also never been published in America. Paal Brekke has published four books of poetry in Norway, and we think of him as the best and most active of the post-war generation in Norway.

The third poet will be the Italian Eugenio Montale. Most Italians feel that Montale and Ungaretti are of equal stature with Quasimodo.

The Sixties # 6 will also include a small group of poems by American poets touching on recent American history. This will include poems on Eisenhower's administration, President Harding, the Cuban Revolution, and other subjects of interest.

The main article will be on the work of Gary Snyder.

There will be a selection of insulting letters recently received by the editors.



WISDOM OF THE OLD

Sometimes I read, in reviews by men whose sleep I have troubled, that I'm one of those poets who've never learned to write poetry. This is true: I never have learned. Sometimes a poem comes to me—I do what I can to it when it comes—and sometimes for years not one comes. During these times the only person who helps much is my wife: she always acts as if I'd written the last poem yesterday and were about to write the next one to-morrow. While I'm writing poems or translating "Faust" I read what I have out loud, and my wife listens to me. Homer used to be led around by a little boy, who would listen to him; all I can say is, if Homer had ever had my wife listen to his poems, he would never again have been satisfied with that little boy.

From the address of Randall Jarrell upon acceptance of the National Book Award, March 14, 1961.

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